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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2017

TAGS: PTER KTFN TU

SUBJECT: (S) DESIGNATING TAK AS A PKK ALIAS

REF: S/CT MEMO TO EUR/SE

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Ref solicited post views on the designation of the Turkish terrorist group, TAK. As extensive IC reporting indicates, TAK has been established by the PKK to create the appearance of separateness. This allows TAK to attack tourist areas in western Turkey while PKK disavows responsibility and seeks to maintain plausible deniability. The Turkish MFA have told us repeatedly they hold strongly to this view, and are particularly sensitive that the idea that TAK is somehow separate from PKK not be given any credibility. Therefore, a USG designation of TAK as a separate group risks Turkish frustration that we are lending credence to the idea they are separate. Post therefore strongly supports the designation of TAK as an alias of PKK. All relevant sections and agencies at post understand that the information available suggests TAK is PKK.

¶2. (S) Given this state of affairs, U.S. designation as an alias is appropriate to make it illegal for TAK to raise funds or gain other forms of support in the U.S. A U.S. designation would also reinforce the EU's recent designation of TAK. Given that TAK has targeted tourist areas and killed European tourists, USG designation of TAK as an alias of PKK might help energize European governments on the PKK threat.

¶3. (S) To assist us in developing a complete file, including unclassified information demonstrating that TAK is really

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PKK, the Turkish MFA obtained from the Interior Ministry a package of summaries of court cases in which evidence regarding suspects in TAK-claimed attacks demonstrate that TAK is PKK. On July 31, we pouched this package to EUR/SE for use by L, S/CT and EUR/SE in deciding on the most appropriate way to proceed. Unfortunately, these documents are in Turkish. Our staff are drafting brief summaries of each case. Those summaries will be pouched separately after they are completed. The Department can then use these summaries to make MLAT requests for the full documents and/or have the entire text of the particular case translated.

¶4. (C) If, after a thorough review of the available information, USG designation experts believe that proving TAK is an alias of PKK will not meet the evidentiary standard under U.S. law, a second-best, but still desirable option would be to pursue designation by the U.S. Treasury of the TAK as an organization "owned and controlled by" the PKK. Although this approach risks Turkish officials perceiving such a designation as implying separate status, we could emphasize the "owned and controlled" language and still prevent the TAK from being able to raise funds in the U.S.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
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